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YOUTH INDUSTRIES IN VIRGINIA

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

“At first I did not care and thought I knew everything. But come to find out there was a lot I did not know. I would like to thank you to be given a chance to better my life.”

Letter sent by a juvenile to a Youth Industries Program Coordinator

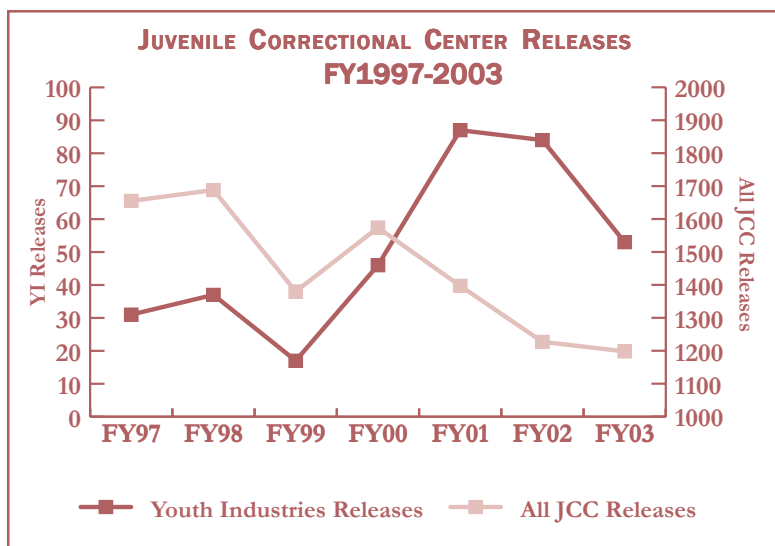
by Susan Nicely and Terrance Gray

INTRODUCTION

Jim wakes up in the morning at 5:30 AM sharp. He showers, shaves, and brushes his teeth before he leaves his house. He gets to work on time and clocks in for the start of another work day. Jim is a full-time press operator at one of the largest printing companies in Virginia, where he worked his way up from a press-operator's helper. He has come a long way from a position he held only a few years earlier as a juvenile incarcerated in a Virginia Juvenile Correctional Center. Jim was committed to the state with felony burglary and larceny offenses. While in the facility, Jim got involved with the Youth Industries Program and spent over a year in the printshop as an apprentice. When he was released, he took with him more than just his freedom; he took an apprenticeship certification and a plan. He said, “I went through the program and did everything it said to do, and I got the job the next day.” The program he refers to is a job-hunting packet that each juvenile is given upon program completion. Jim said Youth Industries is “a brilliant idea that helped pave the road for the future... I got a career because of it.”

Jim's story is not as unique as it may seem. In fact over the last seven fiscal years, 355 juveniles who have passed through the doors of Virginia's Juvenile Correctional Centers (JCCs) have been involved in the Youth Industries (YI) Program. Many of these juveniles will find positive paths for their lives through their training in vocational fields and acquiring employability skills. The goals of the training are to provide these juveniles with the knowledge, experience, and confidence they need to pursue viable careers in the community; thus reducing their risk of recidivating. Many of them need an arena to explore their own potential, and these programs attempt to provide that space for them. “Troubled youth have their talents and potential trapped within the confines of ignorance, fear, and circumstance and are waiting to be freed through concern, patience, and opportunity.”¹

This research presents a snapshot of juveniles released in FY03 who were involved in YI during their commitment. It gives background information about the program itself and an overview of recent trends. Demographics, offense information, classification, treatment needs, and education levels are explored in order to see exactly who these juveniles are and how they compare with youth who were not involved in YI programs. One measure of a successful program is the recidivism rate; recidivism is compared between Youth Industries' participants and non-participants. Information collected from other states is presented in order to see if similar programs exist nationwide. By understanding the population currently served by the YI Program, and its initial impact on these juveniles, it may be possible to determine the success of this type of programming and present the possibility of expanding these programs to make them available to more juveniles. The programs studied are operated by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) through



Youth Industries. Additional vocational programs are offered through the Department of Correctional Education (DCE).

RELEASE TRENDS

From FY97-FY00, the percentage of juveniles released from JCCs who participated in YI was less than 3% each year. In FY01, the program expanded its program offerings, doubling (6%) the percentage of juveniles released in FY01 who participated. Additionally two grants allowed DJJ to supplement the program staff, further expanding participation to 7% in FY02. By FY03, staffing issues forced the temporary suspension of some programs,

EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY A JUVENILE TO A YOUTH INDUSTRIES PROGRAM COORDINATOR:

"Since being in the program, I have learned more about electricity. When I first got into the program I had not worked with electricity before. This program has (given) me a career to go into when I leave. These programs give us a chance to do something with our lives. The teacher has worked with me and told me not to get frustrated. I would also like to thank (teacher) for helping me learn how to write a resume. She has helped me by teaching me the things I would need in life."

BACKGROUND OF NEEDS

The National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) recently completed a study in cooperation with the Youth Development and Research Fund and the Justice Policy Institute that suggests that employment and career-focused programs can prepare juvenile justice-involved youth for a successful transition to the workforce if programs are comprehensive, sustained, and connected to further education or long-term career opportunities.² A set of common barriers seems to exist for juveniles who have been involved with the justice system as they enter the job market. They tend to lack basic skills, have low education levels, are not well prepared for entering the workforce, have poor social skills, are devoid of peer or adult role models, have low expectations for themselves, and are negatively perceived by the community and employers alike.³ Their status in the juvenile justice and educational systems often makes it difficult for them to learn marketable skills or compete for jobs. Yet, research demonstrates that employability is critical to the success of high-risk youth.⁴

The DJJ's YI Program strives to decrease these barriers and to increase employability skills for these juveniles. YI has created programs within the state's JCCs to offer juvenile enterprises and apprenticeship training, expanded vocational education,

decreasing participation to 4%. Clearly, the number of juveniles released from JCCs who have participated in YI varies by the resources available.

increased security through intensive program involvement, and reduced idle time.

PROGRAM DETAILS

In 1993 the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation that authorized the DJJ "...to enter into agreements with public or private entities to operate work programs for juveniles committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice." This Virginia legislation was the origin of the juvenile enterprise initiative entitled Youth Industries. DJJ entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with DCE that established a strong partnership incorporating vocational and job skills training with the employability programs.



Art work created by a YI juvenile

As it stands today, YI is comprised of both apprenticeship and enterprise programs operated in conjunction with DCE's vocational programming. The instruction provided in the programs covers techniques of the trade and also the theory behind the technique. It includes detailed discussions of how typical tasks are performed and the safety precautions that must be taken.

YI PROGRAMS IN VIRGINIA:

Beaumont JCC

Barbering Apprenticeship
Computer Repair Enterprise
Electrical Apprenticeship
Food Service Apprenticeship
Offset Printing Apprenticeship and Enterprise
Silk Screening Apprenticeship and Enterprise

Bon Air JCC

Advertising Design Apprenticeship
Bulk Mail Work Enterprise
Food Service Apprenticeship
Sign Making Enterprise

Culpeper JCC

Embroidering Enterprise
Food Service Apprenticeship
Mail Services

Hanover JCC

Horticulture Apprenticeship and Enterprise

Natural Bridge JCC

Carpentry Apprenticeship
Food Service Apprenticeship
Woodwork Enterprise

Oak Ridge JCC

Immediate Assembly Enterprise

The apprenticeship programs were developed to provide approved and registered job skills training for youth through instruction and hands-on training. Both the program and the student are registered with the US Department of Labor and Industry, thus providing youth with marketable job skills training that is recognized by the business community. Youth who are unable to complete their apprenticeship programs during their commitment will be supported in their efforts to secure apprenticeship placements in the community.⁵

Juvenile Enterprise Programs provide similar hands-on and classroom training to involved youth. These programs generate revenue for items produced;

therefore, the juveniles are paid a modest wage for their work.

Both the enterprise and apprenticeship programs utilize the same selection process for juveniles to be enrolled. A facility treatment team is responsible for screening and recommending youth for participation in the program. The treatment team bases their recommendations on criteria such as youth having:

- At least six months remaining on his/her commitment and being at least 16 years of age when recommended,
- No major offenses in the last 60 days, no moderate offenses in the last 30 days and not serving a program sanction, and
- A stable behavior pattern showing an ability to both self-manage and work independently.

Youth recommended by the treatment team complete an application, review, and interview process that involves their counselor, the Institutional Review Committee, and the potential work supervisor. Juveniles ultimately selected for the program receive vocational and academic instruction; hands-on work-based training; on-going counseling services; transitional skills and services; and long-term follow up.⁶ The Work Supervisor can suspend youth from the program if they are not meeting the established behavioral, educational, and/or on-the-job training expectations. However, many juveniles have reported that they work hard and try to behave just so they can remain in the program. They said they know that there are other juveniles lined up to take their places in these programs, and they value their positions so much that participation in the program is an incentive to modify behavior.

In June 2003 DJJ and DCE were awarded a grant by the US Department of Labor to enhance and expand the vocational and employability skill programs at Beaumont JCC and provide for additional transitional services. This grant enhanced the printing and electrical programs that were being



Two juveniles working in the Printing Program

offered and added a barbering/cosmetology program.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Youth released in FY03 who participated in YI did not differ greatly from non-involved youth when looking at race, sex, and age at first intake. For both YI and non-YI juveniles, the typical ward was male and black. Less than 4% of juveniles, YI and non-YI, were a race other than black or white. The two groups had a similar age at first commitment with YI juveniles first encountering the system at age 15.7 and non-YI juveniles at age 15.1. Differences between these two groups begin to emerge when looking at

JON'S THOUGHTS

Jon is a juvenile recently released from a correctional center and is currently residing in a halfway house. During his time at the facility, he participated in three vocational programs, and feels computer repair training is his field. He is currently employed making counter-tops, but intends to find work in his field at some point. Jon said through the program he, "learned how to respect authority...how to act at interviews and about job performance and expectations." He said the program will "give you a good foundation of work skills, and it teaches you how to interact with employers. It also helps you get your bearings in the employment field."

average age at the time of release. YI juveniles, on average, were 18.8 when released, while non-YI juveniles were 17.3. This difference related to offense and Length of Stay (LOS) information is discussed below.

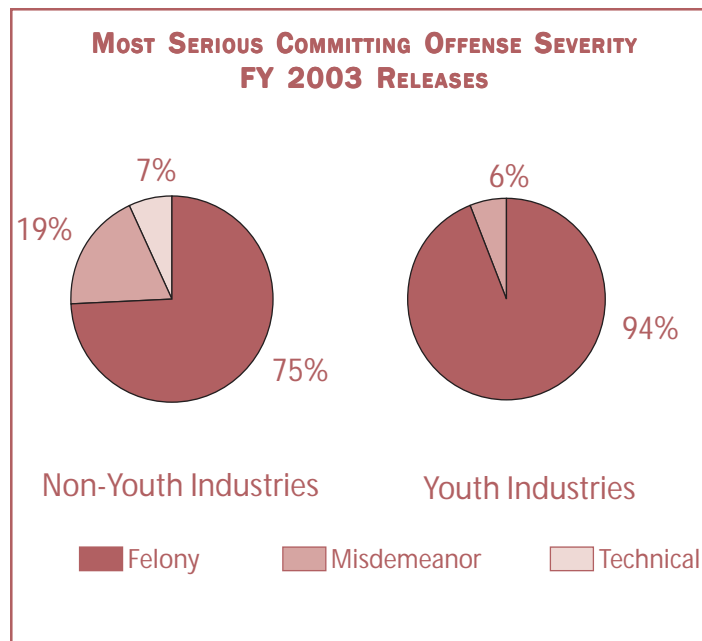
For the YI juveniles released in FY03, nearly half were committed from four localities in Virginia: Chesterfield (15%), Norfolk (13%), Virginia Beach (9%), and Richmond (8%). For non-YI juveniles, many of the localities remained the same, but a much lower percentage can be accounted for by five localities: Richmond (8%), Virginia Beach (8%), Newport News (6%), Norfolk (5%), and Henrico County (4%).

OFFENSE INFORMATION

The majority (94%) of juveniles who were released in FY03 who were involved in YI had a felony as their most serious offense compared to non-YI juveniles (75%). Looking at the felony breakdown, 49% of YI juveniles had felony person offenses compared with 26% of non-YI youth, and 15% of YI juveniles had felony weapons or narcotic distribution offenses.

DEVIN'S THOUGHTS

Devin has been enrolled in the embroidery program at Culpeper JCC for five months. She says she likes the program and states, "I have learned a lot, this is my trade." She sees embroidery as a good starting point toward her ultimate goal of designing clothes. She says, "It is a good program for females that have had troubles - to learn a new skill, turn their life around, and become successful."



Class 1 Misdemeanors accounted for 19% of non-YI juveniles' and 6% of YI juveniles' most serious offenses. None of the YI youth and only 7% of non-YI juveniles had technical violations as the most serious offense. For YI juveniles, the most common offense type (most serious offense) was robbery. Larceny was the most common offense for non-YI youth.

LOS AND CLASSIFICATION

As soon as a juvenile completes the evaluation phase at the C.R. Minor Reception and Diagnostic Center (RDC), he or she is given a determined Length of Stay (LOS), initial classification level, and treatment needs. These factors, along with others, are taken into consideration when assigning the juvenile to a correctional facility. Some juveniles are committed with a predetermined LOS assigned by the court called determinate commitments. Determinate commitments accounted for over 33% of the YI juveniles released in FY03 and less than 10% of non-YI releases.

LOS guidelines are based on current and prior offense history as well as chronicity. For FY03 releases, a "typical" juvenile involved in YI (with an indeterminate sentence) had an assigned LOS of 18-36 months, while the "typical" non-YI juvenile was assigned an LOS range of 12-18 months. While it is important to know the

assigned LOS category, behavior and amenability to treatment may impact the actual LOS with DJJ. For the FY03 released juveniles who were involved in YI programs while incarcerated, the average actual LOS was 23 months, compared to 12 months for non-YI juveniles. This difference may be explained by the fact that more YI juveniles had a sex offender treatment need than non-YI juveniles. The sex offender treatment program protocol can require juveniles to stay longer than the assigned LOS in order to complete the program's requirements.

MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE FY 2003 RELEASES

Offense Type	Non-YI	YI
Abusive Language	0.1%	0.0%
Alcohol	0.6%	0.0%
Arson	1.3%	0.0%
Assault	15.6%	1.9%
Burglary	13.8%	20.8%
Contempt of Court	0.2%	0.0%
Disorderly Conduct	0.7%	0.0%
Escapes	0.5%	0.0%
Extortion	0.4%	0.0%
Failure to Appear	0.1%	0.0%
Fraud	1.6%	1.9%
Gangs	0.2%	0.0%
Kidnapping	0.2%	0.0%
Larceny	25.8%	15.1%
Misc./Other	0.2%	1.9%
Murder	0.4%	5.7%
Narcotics	9.0%	9.4%
Obscenity	0.2%	0.0%
Obstruction of Justice	0.4%	0.0%
Prob./Parole Violation	6.0%	0.0%
Robbery	9.0%	22.6%
Sex Offense	6.3%	18.9%
Status Offense	0.1%	0.0%
Telephone Law	0.1%	0.0%
Traffic	1.0%	0.0%
Trespass	1.0%	0.0%
Vandalism	3.0%	0.0%
Weapons	2.3%	1.9%

*Juveniles with missing offense data are not included (20)

“I would recommend the Youth Industries Programs to other juveniles... It’s a good program and it can help you get a good job. The course work is straight-forward and the knowledge you learn can take you far in life”

Juvenile currently at a halfway house

An initial security classification level is given to each juvenile while at RDC. This level takes into consideration the severity of the current offense, offense history, prior commitments (behavior during these commitments), and escape or runaway history. Each juvenile is reassessed every 90 days or as needed based upon behavior; therefore, juveniles have the potential to come in as a high (level IV) classification and be released with a low (level I) score. “Like other classification systems, the initial classification

IV classifications shows an improved behavior among the YI juveniles that could be, at least in part, attributable to the program itself.

In addition to the determination of LOS and classification level, RDC also determines the juvenile’s treatment needs. DJJ offers three main treatment programs, which are substance abuse, anger management, and sex offender services. A juvenile can be involved in any or all of these treatment programs as well as in YI. For those juveniles released in FY03 the two groups were similar in regards to mandatory or recommended anger management (87% of YI juveniles, 88% of non-YI juveniles). YI releases had a slightly higher need for substance abuse treatment (81% vs. 74% for non-YI juveniles), but the greatest difference was in the sex offender treatment needs. YI releases were more likely to have required sex offender treatment (21%) than were non-YI releases (8%).

EDUCATION

“A large number of students who enter the juvenile justice system have experienced years of school failure as a result of their poor academic and social skills.”⁸ Because the juveniles within the system are not performing academically, it is not surprising to know that the average grade levels in reading, writing, and mathematics are low. Juveniles are given the Woodcock-

Johnson achievement test while at RDC in order to determine their education levels. The juveniles who took part in YI tested higher in all three academic areas, with the greatest difference in reading.

EMPLOYMENT OF YI PARTICIPANTS

“There is ample evidence that employment does lead to better outcomes for delinquent young people... meaningful gainful employment correlates significantly with youthful offenders ‘maturing out’ of delinquent behavior.”⁹ Considering that YI strives to provide these employment opportunities, it is essential to look at employment status once these juveniles are released from the correctional setting. It is also important to keep in mind that while YI trains juveniles in specific vocational fields, a large component of the program focuses on employability skills in general. Therefore, a juvenile acquiring a job outside of his or her vocational field would still be considered a positive outcome.

Of the FY03 YI releases, 35 have been employed since release from the JCC. Fifteen have been involved in a job training program or in school, either high school or college. Of the 35 who were employed, 13 were also involved in job training or school. Of the 18 YI releases who were not employed, two were working on GEDs. Eight of the YI releases in FY03 have been employed in a vocational field at some point after release, and 16 have been employed with a fast food company at some point. (Note: one juvenile could have more than one employment type.) Whether the juveniles are employed, in school, or both, these activities are positive. According to one study,



Wards in the Electrical Apprenticeship Program

instrument relies more on the youth’s attributes at admission while the reclassification form relies more on the youth’s behavior while in custody.”⁷ Given the possibility of two different scores, it is important to present them both in order to ascertain if any “progress” has been made. For YI juveniles released in FY03, 30% had an initial classification level of IV (high) compared with 32% of non-YI juveniles. Likewise when the classification level at the time of release is considered, the percentage of juveniles involved in YI programs with a level IV classification is 2% compared with 17% of non-YI releases. The 28% decrease in level

Average Grade Levels

	Youth Industries	Non-Youth Industries
Reading	9.1	7.6
Writing	5.8	5.2
Math	7.6	6.9



Juveniles in the Barbering Program

engagement in such activities is associated with individuals actually continuing these positive activities and thus not returning to the justice system.¹⁰

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In an effort to acquire a national perspective on programs such as Virginia's YI program, a survey was distributed to all states by DJJ. The survey inquired if the respective state had similar programs and, if so, requested details concerning each type. Because of the unique nature of each state's programming, it is difficult to ascertain a direct comparison among all states. Of the states, 13 states did not participate in this survey and 22 said they did not have programs comparable to Virginia's. Rhode Island responded that average LOS precluded offering any long-term type of skill development programs and only offer exploratory/introductory classes. Pennsylvania responded that it has programs that allow juveniles to pay restitution when applicable, court costs or fines, or to make charitable contributions. Programs such as these two are not directly comparable to Virginia's; and, therefore, will not be included in a discussion of similar programs. However, they do illustrate the variety of training across the US.

The following states reported having programs deemed similar to Virginia's (e.g., on-site training with an instructor who also provides hands-on experience

to juveniles): California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas.

Survey responses indicated some unique programs, such as: Hydroponics, Aquaculture and Animal Husbandry in Hawaii; Novelty Soap Manufacturing offered in California; Hotel Management offered in Nevada; Upholstery and Golf Course Technician Training offered in Louisiana; and Heating, Air-conditioning, Refrigeration offered in Texas. Programs

like these can provide juveniles with training and experience in fields that may be particularly lucrative in their respective states.

In addition to offering training and hands-on exposure to selected vocational areas, some states also reported offering juveniles the opportunity to receive accreditation/certification/licensure in their chosen fields. These certifications/accreditations/licensures are professional in nature and go beyond the school credits that many states mentioned juveniles can earn through the programs. Some examples of programs offering such professional credits include but are not limited to:

- Barbering/Cosmetology License: GA, LA, OH, and VA
- Automotive Certification (mechanics/technology/repair): FL, GA, LA, NY (through Midas), OH, and TX
- Welding Certification: LA, OH, and TX
- Construction Certification: FL, GA, and OH

Nevada reported that it offers professional certifications in the nursing assistant and fire fighting programs; and Hawaii said that it offers licenses for machine operations. Oklahoma, though not offering any professional certification, does provide juveniles who have completed skills training with three months of subsidized employment as part of aftercare services. Georgia reported an extensive education/transition program that gives its juveniles the opportunity to be dually enrolled in technical colleges while involved in the

POPULAR PROGRAMS*

Building Trades/Carpentry/Construction

Florida	New Jersey	Texas
Georgia	New York	Virginia
Louisiana	Ohio	
Minnesota	Oklahoma	

Automobiles (technology/mechanics/body)

Florida	Nevada	Ohio
Georgia	New Jersey	Texas
Louisiana	New York	

Computers (repair/recycling/architecture)

California	Louisiana	Virginia
Florida	New Jersey	
Georgia	New York	

Culinary Arts/Food Service

Florida	Nevada	Virginia
Hawaii	New Jersey	
Louisiana	New York	

Graphic Arts/Printing

Florida	Minnesota	Ohio
Louisiana	New York	Virginia
Maine		

Barbering/Cosmetology

Georgia	New Jersey	Virginia
Louisiana	Ohio	

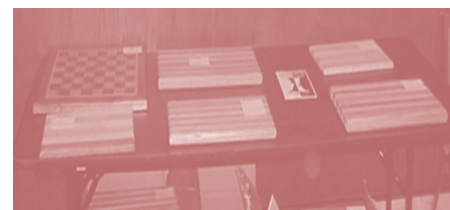
Masonry

Florida	New Jersey	Ohio
Georgia		

Sheet Metal

California	South Carolina
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*This list is based on reported programs and is not exhaustive



Woodworking products made by YI juveniles

correctional center programs. While incarcerated, juveniles can earn professional competency certificates in programs including construction, horticulture, electrical, masonry, auto body, auto mechanics, and computer repair. If they do not complete the program while incarcerated, they are given assistance with school placements.

RECIDIVISM

“Recidivism, or reoffending, is an important concept for juvenile and adult criminal justice systems because it provides a means to measure outcome success.”¹¹ Three commonly accepted definitions used to measure reoffending are rearrest, reconviction, and recommitment. However, DJJ uses reconviction as its official definition of recidivism. (See *Data Resource Guide FY 2003* for more details.)

The ultimate goal of YI is to decrease recidivism by teaching juveniles marketable job skills, giving them work experience, and helping them develop positive work habits. In order to measure recidivism rates, DJJ utilizes a juvenile tracking system to collect data on intakes, commitments to the state, and probation placements to use in conjunction with data provided by the



Two juveniles working in the Electrical Program

State Police on adult arrests and convictions. Use of this system allows DJJ to provide a long-term arrest history for the juveniles released from the correctional centers.

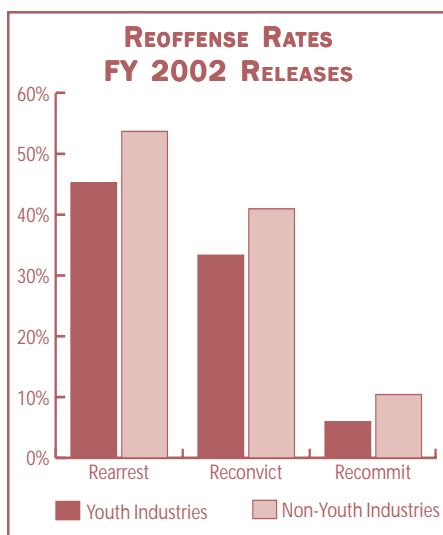
The most recent 12-month reoffense data are available for juveniles released during FY02. These data include all criminal offenses but not: violation of probation/parole, contempt of court, failure to appear, or traffic offenses which are non felony or class 1 misdemeanors. Juveniles released during FY02 who were involved in YI were less likely than their non-YI counterparts to be rearrested, reconvicted, or recommitted. The difference between the two groups when considering rearrest and reconviction rates is 8%, and the difference for recommitment, the most stringent measure of reoffending, is 4%. These data concur with research done in Florida that found, “inmates who had earned a certificate (General Education Diploma or Vocational) through correctional education were 5 percent less likely to recidivate than the remaining population.”¹² Similar results were found in an evaluation of a youthful offender program in California working in conjunction with Trans World Airlines (TWA). Researchers found that participants had a lower risk of recidivating than the general population.¹³

Researchers from Johns Hopkins University identified 7 domains that they found to be key factors in the transition process from JCCs back into the community. One of those 7 domains of reentry was vocational training and education.¹⁴ Evidence was cited from Lipsey that found, “it is only the

programs that provide actual work experience that reduce recidivism.”¹⁵ The main component of the YI program does just that; it provides juveniles with real-world work experience in addition to classroom training.

CONCLUSIONS

“Developmental Psychology suggests that when young people transition into adulthood, they require assistance in learning how, among other things, to live independently, find employment...similar supports would be needed for young people released from custody and that the need for such supports may be considerably greater...(these young people) lack many of the supports typically needed to transition successfully.”¹⁶ The YI program provides juveniles with the skills needed to gain and maintain employment and, more importantly, to develop a sense of pride and self-worth. The fact that juveniles who were involved in these programs are less likely to recidivate is a definite positive result. Because of their longer LOS, the YI juveniles have matured and this may play a role in the reduction of recidivism. It is still important to consider that when they enter the system, the YI juveniles are demographically similar to the non-YI juveniles, but have been committed for more serious offenses. Considering their offense history, it is especially important to reduce their likelihood to recidivate. This program may have provided these juveniles with both the tangible and intangible skills they need to change their lives.



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ENDNOTES

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